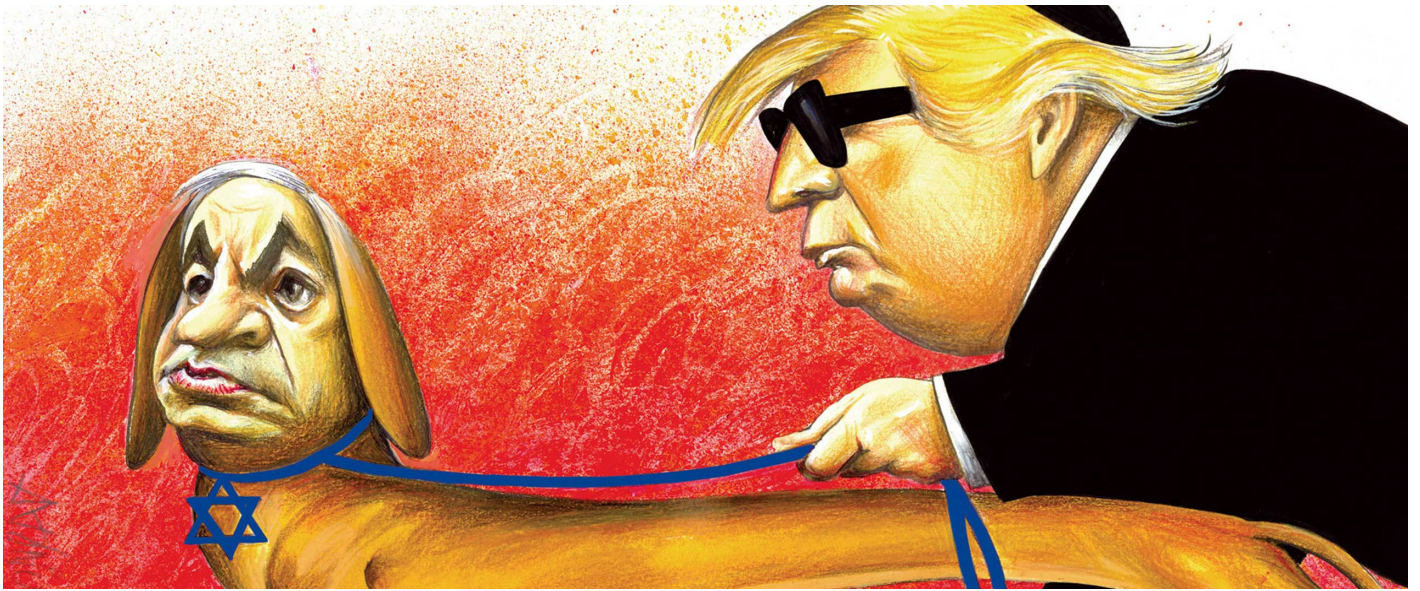




Visual Art & Design

UNDERSTANDING THE REAL ORIGIN OF THAT NEW YORK TIMES CARTOON

How anti-Semitic Soviet propaganda informs contemporary left anti-Zionism

By **Izabella Tabarovsky**
June 6, 2019 • 12:00 AM



A black-and-white photograph from the 1970s [Fig. 1] shows happy Soviet children at a May Day parade. They are hitching a ride on a parade installation: a giant hook-nosed spider wearing a military cap adorned with the Star of David, its teeth bared in a sinister grin. Massive rods under its legs suggest both the spider's web and the meridians of the globe it is trampling. The accompanying slogan offers the proper ideological lens: "Zionism is the weapon of imperialism!"



Fig. 1: Vladimir Sichov, "Zionism is the Weapon of Imperialism!" May Day parade, Moscow, USSR, 1972 (Photo courtesy Vladimir Sichov)

It was this image that popped into my mind the day of the infamous *New York Times's* cartoon [Fig. 2] of a short-legged guide dog Jew with the face of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a Star of David medallion dangling from its collar, dragging a blind kippah-wearing Donald Trump.

The outrage the *Times's* cartoon produced was appropriate, but interpretations of what had happened fell short. Was the cartoon truly a lineal descendant of the anti-Semitic propaganda published in *Der Stürmer*, as *some reflexively opined*? To stop there was to accept the possibility that the offices of the *New York Times's* international edition are packed with white supremacists. Even if a single production editor was responsible for the incident, as *the paper asserted*, the publisher's *decision* to put the entire staff through sensitivity training to address "unconscious biases" would suggest that senior management was worried others in the company might be similarly infected. Yet the idea that the *Times* is infested with neo-Nazis seems patently silly.



Fig. 2. (*New York Times*)

and Ilhan Omar, Marc Lamont Hill, and AJ+ Arabic, Al Jazeera's popular online platform, have all shown an inability to distinguish between what they consider to be anti-Zionist political positions and overt anti-Semitism.

So if anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism are not the same, why is the left doing such a poor job of distinguishing between the two? How is it that the side of the political spectrum that makes anti-racism one of the central tenets of its platform repeatedly stumbles into espousing such vile hatred?

The left would be less confused if it were able to soften temporarily its ahistorical, ideologically driven focus on the right as the sole source of anti-Semitism and devote some time to studying its own rich history of the same. In particular, it should look at the Cold War-era Soviet Union, which for decades not only practiced politically weaponized anti-Zionism but also exported it abroad. Many of the core tropes that animate the anti-Zionist left today are carbon copies of ideas that the KGB and the Department of Propaganda's ideologues developed, weaponized, and popularized with particular intensity in the wake of the Six-Day War. It is there, not among the Nazi oeuvre, that the direct precursors to the *New York Times* cartoon and similar such efforts, in which the European press has been awash for the past two decades, are to be found.

The history of Soviet anti-Zionist cartoons makes obvious that separating anti-Zionism from anti-Semitism can be a challenging if not impossible task. Produced by a system that claimed to have rejected anti-Semitism, and labeled as anti-Zionist, the cartoons nevertheless retained a powerful anti-Semitic charge. So did the rest of the propaganda that the Soviets produced as part of their demonization of Israel and Zionism that began with Stalin's postwar show trials and continued with varying levels of intensity through the end of the USSR.

Soviet anti-Zionist propaganda entered a particularly active stage following the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War in 1967. The propaganda and disinformation campaign that the Soviets developed then, which demonized Israel and Zionism, served their specific domestic and foreign interests and was aimed both at domestic and foreign audiences. It was most likely this latter stage of Soviet anti-Zionism that forged in popular consciousness on the far left false links between Zionism and Nazism, fascism, racism, genocide, settler-colonialism, imperialism, militarism, and apartheid. The ideas from this campaign were actively used in the Soviet promotion of the "Zionism Is a Form of Racism" resolution adopted by the

What makes more sense is the possibility that the cartoon made it into print because the paper's staff—whether singular or plural—saw it as “a political issue and not religious,” in the words of António Moreira Antunes, the artist who drew it. Like the slogan on the Soviet May Day parade installation, the face of the Israeli prime minister must have signaled to the *New York Times* staff that the cartoon was about Israel and therefore political—anti-Zionist perhaps, but not anti-Semitic.

Yet the conventional wisdom on the left that anti-Zionism is easily distinguishable from anti-Semitism has run into some obvious practical difficulties in recent months as the Women's March, the U.K. Labour Party, Congresswomen Rashida Tlaib

United Nations in 1975. And it is this campaign that refined and popularized the particular Holocaust distortion narrative that remains so popular in certain anti-Semitic and anti-Israel circles—the kind that **was recently broadcast** to millions by AJ+.

The Soviet anti-Zionist campaigns produced hundreds of books and thousands of articles smearing Israel, Zionism, and, with them, Judaism and the Jewish people. Newspapers with a circulation in the millions carried these writings to every corner of the USSR. A different set of publications, with similarly million-copy circulations, published in some 80 foreign languages, **carried these messages** to the West and Third World countries. So did radio broadcasts, which in the early 1970s transmitted some 1,000 hours of Soviet propaganda weekly to every continent on the planet.

Soviet ideology didn't allow the Soviets to propagate outright racist anti-Semitism of the Nazi variety. They rejected accusations of anti-Semitism, claiming that their ideology was anti-Zionist, not anti-Semitic. In developing their ideas, Soviet ideologues relied for inspiration on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, on the ideas of classic religious anti-Semitism, and even *Mein Kampf*, but adopted them to the Marxist framework by substituting the idea of a global anti-Soviet Zionist conspiracy for a specifically Jewish one. Jewish power became Zionist power. The rich and conniving Jewish bankers controlling money, politicians, and the media became the rich and conniving Zionists. The Jew as the anti-Christ became the Jew as the anti-Soviet. Instead of the Jew as the devil, they presented the Zionist as a Nazi.

In practice, the distinction between Soviet anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism often proved a distinction without a difference. The tropes were the same, albeit with a new set of labels. Jews living in the Soviet Union saw their culture and religion decimated, educational and professional opportunities depleted, and became licensed targets of casual grassroots anti-Semitism.

Soviet anti-Zionist cartoons relied on a particular set of symbols to identify “the Zionist” as an object of contempt and hatred. Since one of the political goals of Soviet anti-Zionist ideology was to undermine Israel, Soviet caricaturists typically depicted a “Zionist” as wearing Israeli military uniform. When it came to identifying a Jew as such, they used the full arsenal of anti-Semitic portrayals developed over the centuries. One traditional approach was to show a Jew as subhuman in form (a dog, a spider, an octopus, a snake) yet in possession of supernatural powers. The “Zionists” were invariably drawn with stereotypical Jewish facial features—a classic tool of traditional anti-Semitism—to make sure that it was clear who the artist had in mind.

One of the forerunners to the guide dog in the *New York Times* cartoon is the Soviet Israeli-Zionist dog who loyally served its master, the imperialist Uncle Sam. The smallness of the dog signals its contemptibility. For example, the tiny attack dog in this 1969 image [Fig. 3] is barking mad, dropping bombs instead of saliva at the behest of its American master. The dog wears an Israeli military uniform, but the viewer also knows that the dog is a Jew because of its Jewish

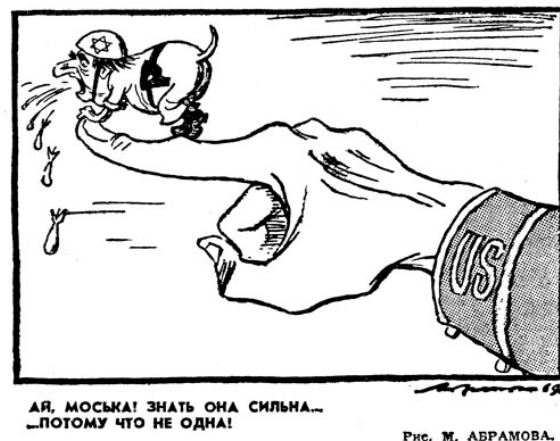


Fig. 3: ‘The puppy knows its own strength because it is not alone,’ M. Abramov, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, July 31, 1969. The accompanying text reads: ‘The Israeli extremists continue their bold provocations because they have the support of the American imperialists.’ (From *The Israeli-Arab Conflict in Soviet Caricatures, 1967–1973* by Yeshayahu Nir, Tcherikover Publishers, 1976)



Fig. 4: 'Plunderer's designs,' R. Gadimov, Bakinsky Rabochi, June 21, 1967. (From *The Israeli-Arab Conflict in Soviet Caricatures, 1967–1973* by Yeshayahu Nir, Tcherikover Publishers, 1976)

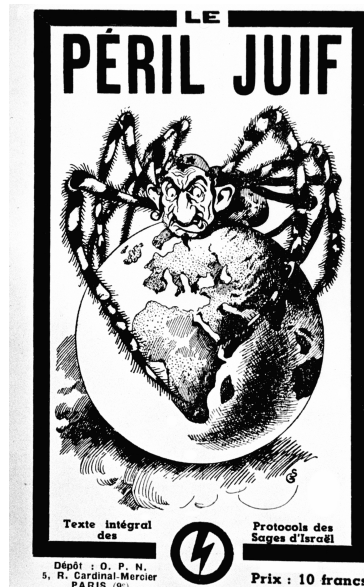
facial features. The uniform makes the Jew—and by extension, any Jew—a fair game for demonization.

The concept of a Jew-Zionist as a stand-in for Israel who drags the United States toward a destination of its choice—the core idea of the *Times*' cartoon—appeared frequently in Soviet caricature. In this figure [Fig. 4], a Jew-Zionist's hand guides the United States to drive a nail into the Arab lands already branded with a Star of David. The hammer has a dollar sign on it—a frequent motif in Soviet caricature invoking the familiar anti-Semitic trope of Jews and greed. In this one [fig 5], an Israeli Jew with a gun is riding on a barrel of oil as he leads the United States into war.



Рис. З. Горфинкель.

Fig. 5: 'Firing point-blank,' R. Gadimov, Sovetskaya Latvia, Jan. 29, 1970; Pravda, March 8, 1970. (From *The Israeli-Arab Conflict in Soviet Caricatures, 1967–1973* by Yeshayahu Nir, Tcherikover Publishers, 1976)



| Fig. 6

The goal of these cartoons was to demonize Israel and Zionism. But the use of stereotypical pejorative signifiers of a Jew showed whom its intended audience would find at fault: any Jew it came in touch with.

The kind of Jew-spider we saw in the photograph from the 1970s was another frequent figure in Soviet caricature. The Jew as spider is a timeless trope in the anti-Semite's arsenal, once gracing the cover of a **French edition** of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* [Fig. 6]. (Note that here the Jew is not a

Zionist but a Judeo-Bolshevik, which illustrates the eternal ideological flexibility of the anti-Semite.)

The Soviets put this golden oldie to their own use. One of the best-known Soviet images of this kind is titled "A Zionist Cobweb Spider: at his favorite work" [Fig. 7]. The spider has stereotypical Jewish features, a contemptible posture, and an aggressive scowl. The word "Zionism" graces its back. Its web has the Star of David at its heart and is made up of *calumnies, lies, anti-Soviet attitudes, "the Jewish question,"* and *anti-communism*—words written along the meridians of the web. The vile anti-Semitic quality of this image is obvious, and the "Zionist" labeling does nothing to reduce it.

Jew as a vile and deadly snake is present in Soviet propaganda as well. Fig. 8 shows an aggressive, hook-nosed snake riding on a barrel of oil labeled "U.S. oil monopolies." Like the snake **on a different cover** [Fig. 9] of the *Protocols*, this Soviet anti-Zionist snake has stereotypical Jewish facial features and Stars of David drawn along its body. Both the Jewish-conspiracy snake and the Zionist-conspiracy ones threaten to suffocate the world—the *Protocols* one literally, and the Zionist one by depriving the world of

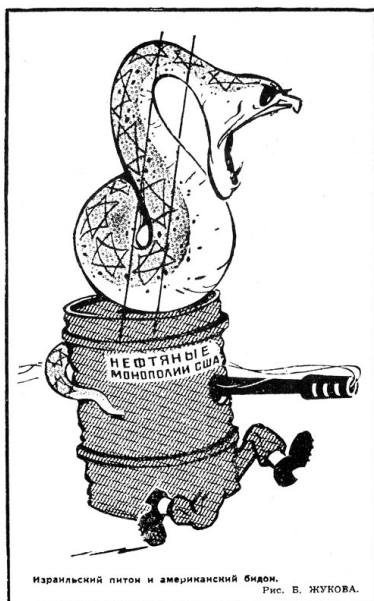


Fig. 8: 'The Israeli python and the American barrel,' B. Zhukov, Pravda Vostoka, Feb. 11, 1968. (From The Israeli-Arab Conflict in Soviet Caricatures, 1967–1973 by Yeshayahu Nir, Tcherikover Publishers, 1976)

perhaps the most disturbing and consequential set of Soviet anti-Zionist cartoons were ones that sought to tie Zionism and Nazism together—a link that remains alive and well on today's anti-Zionist left. While the comparison itself dates back to the 1930s, it wasn't until the Soviets launched their post-1967 anti-Zionist campaign that it became truly developed and popularized at home and abroad. It was this parallel that, **in the words of William Korey**, helped transform Zionism into “the bête noire of the international community,” turning Zionism into a representation of evil incarnate.

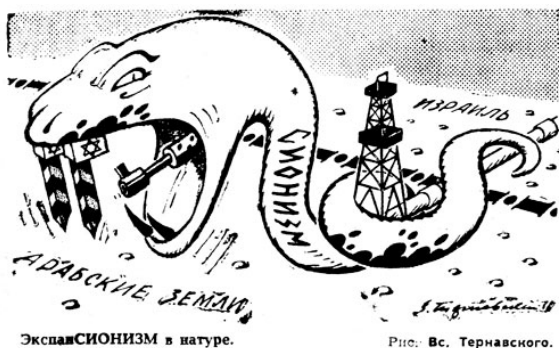
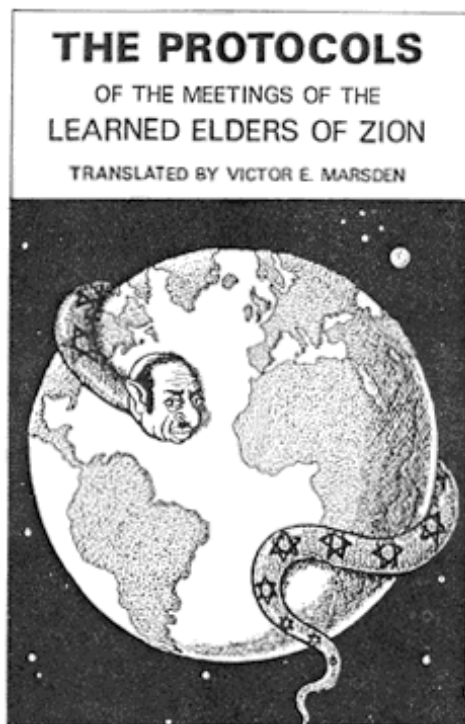


Fig. 10: 'ExpanSIONISM in real life,' V. Ternavsky, Bakinsky Rabochi, March 21, 1971. (From The Israeli-Arab Conflict in Soviet Caricatures, 1967–1973 by Yeshayahu Nir, Tcherikover Publishers, 1976)

vital energy resources. In Fig. 10, the snake has a gun in place of a tongue and the word “Zionism” written on its body. The caption, “ExpanSIONISM in real life,” is spelled in such a way as to play on words: “Sionism” is the Russian for Zionism.

But



| Fig. 9

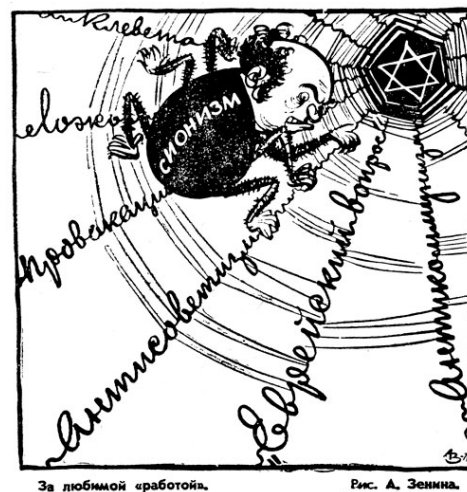


Fig. 7: 'At his favorite work,' A. Zenin, Sovetskaya Moldavia, Aug. 29, 1971. The cartoon is titled 'A Zionist Cobweb Spider.' (From The Israeli-Arab Conflict in Soviet Caricatures, 1967–1973 by Yeshayahu Nir, Tcherikover Publishers, 1976)

The caricatures helped to make this connection visceral. They did so with the help of several sleights of hand. One was to juxtapose, associate, and even merge the swastika with the Star of David [Fig. 11]. Here the Star of David and the symbol of one of the greatest evils to befall humanity literally become one. This approach is still used widely on the anti-Israel left, as in the picture of the Israeli flag that **appeared** in the leftist *Daily Kos* blog [Fig. 12].

Another was to present the Nazis (often Hitler himself) as a mirror image or shadow of the Jew-Zionist. One of the most striking caricatures of this style is shown in Fig. 13, which depicts a middle-aged man with stereotypical Jewish features holding an ax dripping with blood. Making the image even

more sinister is its cast shadow, which takes the form of Adolf Hitler's silhouette. The Star of David on the Jew's ax becomes a swastika in the shadow. This cartoon is particularly interesting because the Jew in it has neither Israeli military uniform nor any of the other typical signifiers by which he might be labeled a "Zionist."



Fig. 12.

Here the very faint line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism is completely erased. The caricaturist is honest: It is about Jews, not "Zionists." As the Dutch researcher Judith Vogt noted in her 1984 essay "When Nazism Became Zionism: An Analysis of Political Cartoons," "Hitler's shadow evokes the Jew's reputed gift of mimicry—of always being able to change his identity." This shape-shifting ability is commonly attributed to Satan, to whom Jews were frequently compared by religiously motivated anti-Semites. Here, as with other aspects of classic anti-Semitism, the Soviets adapted a well-worn concept for their own purposes.

In Fig. 14, Hitler's face, drawn inside a Star of David, looks almost childish and innocent, whereas the very real, obviously Jewish Israeli soldier has blood dripping from his weapon and scenes of destruction in the background. In figure 15, an Israeli soldier and a Nazi German soldier each hold a gun and pose in the same way before a scene of devastation. But the Nazi German figure is a museum painting in a frame, rendering him harmless. The Israeli Jew, on the other hand, is real and therefore the more dangerous.

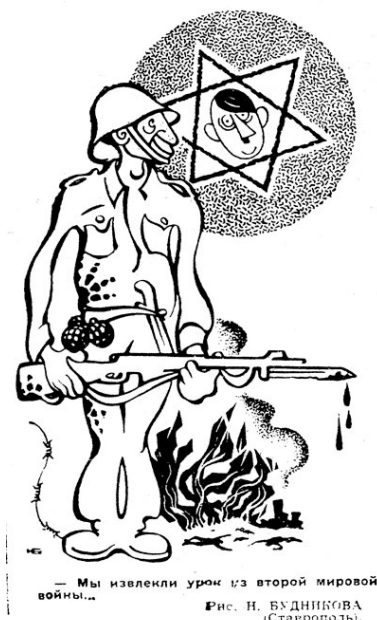


Fig. 14: 'We learned a lesson from World War II ...,' N. Budnikov (Stavropol), Gudok, March 5, 1972. (From *The Israeli-Arab Conflict in Soviet Caricatures, 1967–1973* by

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Fig. 11: 'The banner of the Zionist gang,' Pravda Vostoka, December 1971



ПО ОБРАЗУ И ПОДОБИЮ.

Рис. А. Зенна.

Fig. 13: 'In His image and likeness,' A. Zenin, Sovetskaya Moldavia, Jan. 22, 1972. (From *The Israeli-Arab Conflict in Soviet Caricatures, 1967–1973* by Yeshayahu Nir, Tcherikover Publishers, 1976)

A specific subset of Soviet propaganda, including caricatures, sought to explicitly connect with Zionism concepts that the Soviet people, as well as Western audiences, already associated with Nazi Germany. In Fig. 16, an Israeli Jewish soldier is holding a weapon that has the word *Blitzkrieg* written on it. He is standing next to a signpost painted as an Israeli flag and bearing the word *Lebensraum*—a clear attempt to equate Israel's 1967 territorial conquests with the Nazi conquest of Soviet territories. In front of the soldier is a deathlike figure dressed in Nazi uniform showing the soldier a picture of an Auschwitz crematorium, with *New Order* written on it. Here, too, the Nazi is reduced to a mere shadow of his former self. His characteristics and ideology are now conferred on the Israeli Jew.

According to Israeli scholar Yeshayahu Nir, who analyzed Soviet caricature in his book *The Israeli-Arab Conflict in Soviet Caricatures 1967–1973*, most of the time these caricatures were published in mass-circulation newspapers without any overt tie to events. The same image could be reprinted days,

objective was propaganda, not information or commentary. The goal was not to criticize Israeli policies; it was to demonize the country and everything it represented.



Fig. 16: 'The familiar wares,' V. Fomichev, Sovetskaya Rossia, Aug. 11, 1967. (From The Israeli-Arab Conflict in Soviet Caricatures, 1967–1973 by Yeshayahu Nir, Tcherikover Publishers, 1976)

weeks, or years later without any changes or connection to political developments. Their

Foreign-directed Soviet anti-Zionist propaganda gradually built in for its audiences associations between Israel and such familiar Nazi German-specific terms as genocide, concentration camps, deportations, and *Lebensraum*. Israeli scholar Baruch Hazan **documented** this progression. By 1969, he wrote, the concept of “Zionist racism” was in active circulation in Soviet press materials directed abroad. By 1971, it was linking the Nazi phrase “master race” to the Jewish religious concept of a chosen people. (This idea would gain particular notice in the global community when it **featured prominently** in a major speech in the Security Council by the Soviet ambassador to the U.N., Yakov Malik.) Later still it added the idea that Zionism practices racism against anti-Zionist Jews everywhere.

“While stories of Israeli cruelty are broadcast indiscriminately by Moscow, ... concepts such as ‘Nazism,’ ‘concentration camps,’ ‘Gauleiters,’ ‘*Herrenvolk*,’ etc., are used mainly in articles and broadcasts aimed at European audiences,” wrote Hazan. “Racism,’ ‘discrimination,’ and plain sadism are reserved for African audiences, which are generally not acquainted with Nazi terminology. Stories about racism practiced against all Jews who oppose the Zionist idea are directed at places where, in fact, there are practically no Jews—such as Southeast Asia.”

These ideas and images continue to permeate the anti-Zionist discourse on the far left. They are also evident in the anti-Zionist caricature of today: from a Jew viewing his mirrored reflection as Hitler [Fig. 17], to a comparison of the West Bank and Gaza territories to Auschwitz [Fig. 18], to the use of the swastika to denote the State of Israel [Fig. 19].

The contemporary left needs to understand that Soviet history is its history. Just as the right needs to take responsibility for the historical and emotional meanings of the buzzwords and images it deploys, the American far left has its own soul-searching to do: **according to** the historian Stephen Norwood, many of its predecessors rationalized or simply ignored Soviet-style anti-Semitism. Some even defended it.



«ТАЛАНТЫ» И ПОКЛОННИКИ.
Рис. В. КОНСТАНТИНОВА.

Fig. 15: 'Talent and its admirers,' V. Konstantinov, Vecherniya Moskva, March 11, 1970. (From The Israeli-Arab Conflict in Soviet Caricatures, 1967–1973 by Yeshayahu Nir, Tcherikover Publishers, 1976)



| Fig. 17

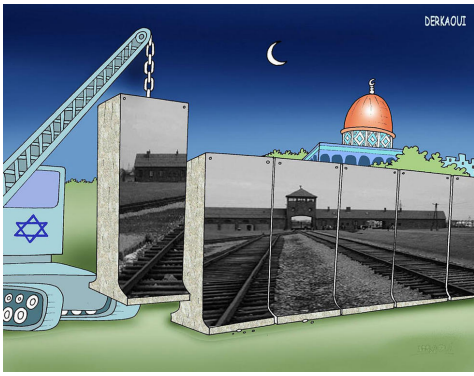


Fig. 18: This cartoon by Derkaoui Abdellah, which won first prize in the 2006 Iranian Holocaust Cartoon Competition in Tehran, was reposted on Daily Kos.

Today, the often-voiced idea that today's far-left anti-Semitism is merely "political" and therefore benign is rapidly losing its already-thin credibility. No one doubts that there are white supremacists who are armed and ready to kill. But what is the impact of an anti-Semitic image published in one of the world's most widely circulated and respected newspapers?

Anti-Semites recognize anti-Semitism no matter what side of



| Fig. 19: Drawing by Carlos Latuff.

the aisle they live on. It is no accident that Holocaust denier David Irving **expressed** admiration for the self-described anti-racist Jeremy Corbyn and white supremacist David Duke **did the same** for Ilhan Omar. This approval should cause the far left to ask itself some difficult questions about the role its own tropes may play in the murders executed by the far right, in the ongoing **wave of hate crimes** against Jews being committed by non-white assailants in New York and other cities, and in the mainstreaming of openly anti-Semitic discourse behind the fig leaf of anti-Zionism.

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COMMENT PRINT EMAIL

MORE IN: ANTI-SEMITISM ANTI-ZIONISM CARTOON DAVID IRVING ILHAN OMAR



| (Original photo: [Library of Congress](#))

There are two sets of laws in the United States today. One is inscribed in law books and applies to the majority of Americans. The other is a canon of privileges enjoyed by an establishment under the umbrella of an intelligence bureaucracy that has arrogated to itself the rights and protections of what was once a free press.

The media is now openly entwined with the national security establishment in a manner that would have been unimaginable before the advent of the age of the dossier—the literary forgery the FBI used as evidence to spy on the Trump team. In coordinating to perpetrate the Russiagate hoax on the American public, the media and intelligence officials have forged a relationship in which the two partners look out for the other’s professional and political interests. Not least of all, they target shared adversaries and protect mutual friends.

Recently WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was indicted on 17 counts of violating the espionage act for obtaining military and diplomatic secrets from U.S. Army intelligence officer Chelsea Manning and publishing them in 2010. First Amendment lawyers and free speech activists worry that the indictments are likely to have a “chilling” effect on the practice of journalism. Others, however, argue that the First Amendment doesn’t apply to the WikiLeaks founder.

“Julian Assange is no journalist,” Assistant Attorney General for National Security John Demers said in a press briefing last week.

The Department of Justice’s position found support, of all places, in the media. “Julian Assange himself is not a journalist,” said CNN national security and legal analyst Asha Rangappa. “He was not engaged in bona fide newsgathering or publication and put national security at risk intentionally,” Rangappa told NPR.

Who’s Asha Rangappa, you ask, and how did she become an expert on journalism?

According to a profile in *Elle* magazine, she worked three years in the FBI (Robert Mueller was director) as a counterintelligence official in the New York field office before returning to her alma mater, Yale Law School, as its admissions director. In that post she became famous for destroying admissions records to prevent students from legally accessing them. With the advent of the Russiagate hoax, Rangappa has become one of the best-known faces of a new, hybrid industry in which former national security bureaucrats are rebranded as “journalists.”

Here are the people that Americans get their national security news from these days:

Before becoming a national security analyst for CNN, former director of national intelligence, James Clapper, had previously been a news item himself after lying to Congress in 2013 when he testified that the NSA wasn’t collecting data on Americans. He later provided inconsistent testimony to Congress in 2017 when he said he had not spoken with the press about the Steele dossier while he was DNI and then admitted he’d spoken with future CNN colleague Jake Tapper about it.

Other members of CNN’s shadow intelligence organization include Josh Campbell, one-time special assistant to ex-FBI Director James Comey, and CIA official Philip Mudd. What qualifies them as journalists, as opposed to Assange? They worked in the intelligence community.

CNN rival NBC/MSNBC features an even more formidable roster of spooks. At the top is John Brennan, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency. During his time at the helm of the CIA, the agency spied on Congress, lied about it and finally got outed by an internal report forcing Brennan to issue apologies to the senators who had been targets of the intelligence operation. “The C.I.A. unconstitutionally spied on Congress by hacking into the Senate Intelligence Committee computers,” Colorado Democratic Sen. Mark Udall wrote at the time. In a statement calling on Brennan to resign, Udall wrote: “This grave misconduct not only is illegal but it violates the U.S. Constitution’s requirement of separation of powers” and called the episode evidence of “a tremendous failure of leadership.”

Another NBC contributor is former CIA analyst Ned Price, who as Obama national security staff spokesman misled the U.S. press and public regarding Obama administration policy.

NBC reporter Ken Dilanian said of the WikiLeaks founder: “Many believe that if [Assange] ever was a journalist, those days ended a long time ago.” Others have said the same of Dilanian, based on a 2014 report showing that the NBC journalist was sending his articles to CIA headquarters for fact-checking.

NBC was named in a defamation lawsuit last week filed by the lawyer for a British academic, Svetlana Lokhova, a Moscow-born historian who was dragged into a US intelligence operation to frame Trump’s former national security adviser, Michael Flynn, as a Kremlin asset. Lokhova was accused without any evidence whatsoever of being a Russian spy by several U.S. and U.K. press outfits.

MSNBC's Malcolm Nance—whose Twitter feed identifies him as “US Intelligence +36 yrs. Expert Terrorist Strategy, Tactics, Ideology. Torture, Russian Cyber!”—was one notable player in the journalist-spook nexus pumping up the story that Lokhova was a spy who ensnared Flynn. In early 2017 Nance **tweeted**: “Flynn poss caught in FSB honeypot w/female Russian Intel asset.”

Fellow MSNBC contributor Naveed Jamali—author of *How to Catch a Russian Spy* and a self-described “Double agent” and “Intel Officer”—joined in **tweeting**: “Here’s the other thing to understand about espionage: once you’ve crossed the line once, the second time is easier. While at DIA Flynn had contact with Svetlana Lokhova who allegedly has Russian intel ties.”

Lokhova is seeking \$25 million from NBC, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, Dow Jones & Co., owner of the *Wall Street Journal*, and **U.S. government informant Stefan Halper**. The British historian alleges that Halper was the source for the press’ multipronged smear campaign against her, a private citizen.

Unlike the New Journalists at CNN and MSNBC/NBC, Julian Assange meets the old-fashioned definition of a journalist, meaning a person who is willing to take personal risks to publish information that powerful people and institutions routinely lie to the public about in order to advance their political and personal agendas.

And yet it’s true that the **leaks Assange published in 2010** may have endangered U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. Further, by failing to redact those documents—as WikiLeaks **colleagues reportedly urged**—Assange may have put a price on the heads of **informants** who came forth to help the United States.

Former CIA Director **Robert Gates** said in 2010 that Assange was morally culpable. “And that’s where I think the verdict is ‘guilty’ on WikiLeaks. They have put this out without any regard whatsoever for the consequences.”

Gates was less certain that Assange damaged U.S. interests. The longtime public servant **acknowledged** that the publication of the 2010 leaks was embarrassing and awkward. “Consequences for U.S. foreign policy?” said Gates. “I think fairly modest.”

Commentators claim that the indictments have nothing to do with Assange’s publishing stolen Democratic National Committee emails in the months before the 2016 election that might have damaged Hillary Clinton’s candidacy. That is not true. The purpose of the indictments, like the Russiagate hoax itself, is to send a message. The U.S. security establishment will use both legal and extraconstitutional methods to protect its privileges and prerogatives while waging a relentless campaign against anyone who dares to encroach on them.

The indictments against Assange further confirm the dossier-era degradation of the American public sphere, where spies are now in charge of shaping the news, with the goal of advancing their own institutional agendas, prosecuting political hits, and keeping themselves and their political patrons beyond the reach of the laws that apply to everyone else.

“No responsible actor, journalist or otherwise, would purposefully publish the names of individuals he or she knew to be confidential human sources in a war zone,” John Demers said during last week’s press

briefing on the Assange indictments.

The head of DOJ's national security division also thanked the media for their role in protecting American democracy. But how the Justice Department apparently understands its cozy bureaucratic partnership with New Journalists like Asha Rangappa and her colleagues is worth looking at.

In late March, Demers sat for an [hour-long public interview](#) with *Washington Post* reporter Ellen Nakashima to discuss the challenges facing DOJ and the National Security division—including China, Iran, and of course Russia.

Nakashima was part of the joint *New York Times* and *Washington Post* team that won a 2018 [Pulitzer Prize](#) “for deeply sourced, relentlessly reported coverage in the public interest that dramatically furthered the nation’s understanding of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and its connections to the Trump campaign, the President-elect’s transition team and his eventual administration.”

Many of the 20 stories cited by the Pulitzer committee appear to be sourced to leaks of classified information. Demers’ interlocutor in March had her byline on one of the Pulitzer-cited *Post* stories that, if the reporting is to be believed, was sourced to leaks of classified information drawn from an intercept of a foreign official.

A Feb. 9, 2017, [Post story](#) by Nakashima, Adam Entous, and Greg Miller reported on former Trump official Michael Flynn’s conversation with then-Russian ambassador to the United States Sergei Kislyak. The story related details from the conversation, and is sourced to “officials who had access to reports from U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies that routinely monitor the communications of Russian diplomats.”

It’s useful comparing the nature of the leaks Assange published and those made public by the *Post*. Of the more than 250,000 diplomatic cables that [WikiLeaks published](#), half were unclassified. The rest were mostly classified “Confidential,” with [11,000 classified](#) “Secret.” None are classified “Top Secret.” The reports regarding Afghanistan, Iraq, and Guantanamo Bay were classified no higher than “Secret.”

By contrast, intercepts of foreign officials, like the one regarding the Russian ambassador, are so sensitive that they are available only to a very few senior U.S. officials. The fact that the substance of one such intercept appears to have been leaked and discussed, according to the *Post*, by nine U.S. officials, should have sparked an immediate investigation.

The Justice Department did not respond to Tablet’s email asking whether any of the nine officials who discussed the Flynn leak are currently under investigation.

Another [story](#) with a Nakashima byline, dated July 21, 2017, reported on communications between Kislyak and Moscow regarding the ex-envoy’s conversations with former Attorney General Jeff Sessions. The conversations, write Nakashima and her *Post* colleagues, “were intercepted by U.S. spy agencies.” This story was also sourced to U.S. officials.

DOJ did not respond to Tablet’s email asking whether the U.S. officials who discussed the Sessions leak are under currently under investigation.

DOJ also did not respond when asked if Nakashima and the other Pulitzer-Prize-winning *Post* reporters who published stories sourced to classified information are under investigation.

Nakashima did not respond to an email from Tablet requesting comment for publication. *Washington Post* Executive Editor Martin Baron did not respond by press time to emails requesting comment for publication.

So should Nakashima and her colleagues be held to the same legal standards as Julian Assange? Of course not. Assange was in trouble, Rangappa reasoned, because he “was not a passive recipient of classified information the way that a journalist who is receiving ... an anonymous leak might be, that he was actively participating in the solicitation encouragement of – in the process of getting this information illegally.”

Yet the *Post* and the *Times* can hardly be considered “passive recipients” of “an anonymous leak.” The leaks were provided not by whistleblowers outing the wrongdoings of government officials—which was Assange’s territory. Rather, the *Post* and *Times* gave a platform to U.S. officials who abused surveillance programs and other government resources in order to prosecute a political campaign against the sitting president and his advisers. The Pulitzer citation itself provides a timeline showing that the stories are evidence of a campaign of leaks lasting more than half a year.

Yes, Assange’s leaks may have endangered American troops and certainly put foreign nationals at risk. Assange also endangered national security by exposing sources. And yet the *Post* and the *Times* were active participants in a political operation that abused surveillance programs designed to keep Americans safe from terrorism. Who endangered American national security more?

Many journalists now claim to be concerned about President Trump’s ordering Attorney General William Barr to declassify documents related to the FBI’s Russia investigation—a move that old fashioned truth seekers should surely welcome. The worry now, say media industry insiders, is that declassification may reveal sensitive government sources. However, there was little media concern that the campaign of Russiagate leaks targeting the Trump circle endangered U.S. citizens or foreign nationals.

Here, for instance, is an April 11, 2017, [Ellen Nakashima story](#), again seemingly sourced to classified information, disclosing that the FBI had a surveillance warrant on Trump campaign adviser Carter Page on suspicion he was a Russian agent. The former U.S. Navy officer was subjected to a campaign of harassment, including death threats. British historian Svetlana Lokhova was also subjected to abuse and harassment.

Why is the media, an industry nominally devoted to transparency, fighting the publication of documents likely to shed light on government wrongdoing? Because those documents are also likely to reveal the media’s role in the intelligence community’s campaign of political warfare targeting Americans.

For instance, among the documents Barr has reportedly been asked to declassify is [exculpatory evidence](#) regarding former Trump campaign adviser George Papadopoulos. The *New York Times* was first to report in its Pulitzer-cited Dec. 31, 2017, story that the FBI opened its investigation of the Trump campaign after Papadopoulos relayed information regarding Clinton emails to an Australian diplomat.

Should the [exculpatory evidence](#) prove that the FBI knew early on that Papadopoulos was never part of any Russian plot to interfere with the election, it will show that the bureau’s investigation was a political dirty-tricks campaign—which the special counsel inherited in May 2017 and kept afloat for nearly two more years. Rather than unraveling the lies that sustained the FBI’s dirty Russiagate investigation, the press’ selective reporting served rather as a shield to defend intelligence officials spying on Americans who were guilty only of supporting the wrong presidential candidate.

There is little chance the *Post* or *Times* reporters will be prosecuted for doing what Assange did—and much worse. However, the Assange indictments coupled with the rewards reaped by America's premier newspapers for their role in a spy agency information campaign send a clear message not only to journalists but also to the public at large. In abusing both the rights of a free press and national security programs designed to keep Americans safe from terrorism, the press and intelligence bureaucracy have made us less free and less safe. The larger message they're sending is, it's not your country anymore. It's ours.

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